

SPECULATIVE TRIBUNE #4

1180 Puma Street, Recoleta, Santiago, Chile

Friday, October 30, 2015



EDITORIAL RECORDING TO THE PLAN by TOMA

During the days previous to the opening of the Chicago Biennial, each installation was built and mounted by the participants or their assistants. As a Rude Goldberg machine, the process followed a number of continuous, calculated and concatenated tasks, which took each project towards an expositive state. In this way, at the opening, large part of the intentions, processes, complexities and contrarities were veiled to the spectator. Behind the charm of the resulting forms, its ways to be built and produced were hidden.

The curatorial proposal had the nerve to trust the success of the whole exhibition on each one of the participants by delivering on them several liberties in format and in the execution of the proposals. However, this sort of diastole, this precious act of trust, could have had a systole: the definition of a State of Art could be approached by encouraging collective dialogue, enriched at the same time by the individual freedoms given to each participant. As someone auto-critically said, "we missed the chance of a collective meeting, everyone in one round table, like the Cold War". During the intense days of inaugurations and receptions, there were no internal contexts for the generation of real collective situations in which speculating on the state of art of architecture became possible.

Now back home, we've learned a lesson: we fell into the trap. Before we got to Chicago, we relied on our capability of producing settings for working both openly and auto-critically, and we trusted more in improvisation than in a detailed plan. The many social events programmed suppressed our plan-breaking plan. We followed the first scheme, cancelling the possibility of losing control.

This experience -the biennial-, just as a building, brings along an image of ourselves and an overview of a certain social and temporal context. In this case, abundance was favored over scrutiny. Differing to Goldberg machine, the opportunity of a chain reaction that the concurrence of projects could have triggered was dismissed. In this way, things stayed under control and the plans developed just as expected. Losing control makes possible to, at least temporarily, destroy hierarchies, crush exclusiveness on decision-making, explore other orders and speculate on possibilities of collective organization.

Maybe we don't need chaos as a permanent condition, but it is essential to take things as far as possible and to let them stay -at least for a while- in the very moment of their collapse. Thus, we can transform this "state of the art" into something more than a "state" in its static sense, representative of a historical moment, and understand this state in a collective context of transformation, capable of working, to change our reality. Ultimately, what is more interesting about the Goldberg machine is its image of an open and transparent mechanism.

NINE ELEVEN WHEN ARCHITECTURE DISEMBODIES ITSELF

Extract from
**PROGRAMMED
DISMANTLEMENT
OF DIEGO
PORTALES
BUILDING**

UNCTAD III/GMMCC/DIEGO PORTALES
by Javier Riosco Arcos

Shift of Government;
change in use and in
meaning.

I want to explain some
processes respecting the change
of what we now know as the "Diego
Portales" building.

The project was thought to
be the first building destined
for culture (once the UNCTAD III
was over); it is carried out the
donation of 500 art works, coming
from different parts of the world.
Spontaneously, the building
is beginning to be called "The
Museum of the People", officially
"Gabriela Mistral Metropolitan
Cultural Center" (GMMCC). As well,
the installations were enabled,
giving a main use to the building's

casino, where indeed citizen of all
kinds joined.

On September, 11th (eleventh)
1973 (nineteen seventy three), due
to the bombing against "La Moneda"
(the president's house), the Junta
of the Military Government had
to have an operation center; the
chosen building would be exactly
the GMMCC, which would change
its name definitively with the
inauguration of the bust of Diego
Portales -which took place,
symbolically, on September 11th
(eleventh) 1975 (nineteen seventy
five) at 11:00 (eleven o'clock) am
(14)-, located just at the facade
of the building, in the main stairs.
This event was informed by press
in the following terms:

"A bust of the illustrious
public man Diego Portales was
inaugurated yesterday in homage
to the man that in the first half
of the last century gave definitive
personality to the Chilean
republic." (15)

The ex UNCTAD building is
remodeled, the art works -with
other elements stored there-
were destroyed, burned, given
away, among other things. In
addition, the building change
its facade, some accesses were

closed, the glasses were replaced
by walls, fences were installed.
That is to say, the image and the
shape mutated, leaving it covered
and isolated. Opposed to what was
first pretended.

In 1990 (nineteen ninety)
democracy arrives in Chile,
nevertheless the building
continues in the same condition
that during the dictatorship.
The governments from then on
will show no interest in making
changes to the building, which
was destined to conventions and
meetings, of different groups and
institutions. Lapsed fifteen years
without maintenance the result
is: On March 5th (fifth) 2006 (two
thousands and six) the emblematic
building of Santiago burns. A
mammoth fire destroys 1/3 (a
third) of the building. Nowadays
the building remains in the same
conditions, waiting the beginning
of the construction of the project
winner of the "International
public contest of architectural
preliminary plans Gabriela Mistral
cultural center".

14. 11 SETTEMBRE 1975, QUE PASA, Santiago,
Chile, Septiembre de 1975, p. 6, col.
15. BUSTO a Diego Portales se inauguró Ayer,
NN, Santiago, 12 de septiembre de 1975, p. x, col. 3.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

by Xavier Wrona

A revolution has happened.
It was the work of a group of
armed intellectual radicals,
it fundamentally altered the
relationship between working
classes and means of production
everywhere. Ideas were
appropriated by policy makers
and implemented on a large scale,
spreading over the vast majority of
the globe, engulfing people in all
countries. Contradicting all fears,
this revolution was not led by the
proletariat, but by the capital.

The revolution was
architectural. Laid out in
theory, articulated in plan, and
implemented in practice, it did
to the world what architects do
to buildings: it imposed an order.
The revolution led by Friedman,
Hayek, and Nozick imposed an
architectural order in which any
intervention of the collective
"state" was seen as a barrier to the
"natural self-regulation of
individual needs." It regimented
reality, turning each passing day
into a spectacular confirmation
of its principles and their massive

consequences on societies.

This is an architectural
review, one that will not focus
on "remarkable buildings" but on
the massive and revolutionary
architectural shifts of societies.
We must be done with the idea
that architecture is a history of
buildings: architecture is the
means by which a society embodies
moral law in reality. It is the
formatting of the real contained in
each understanding of the world.
This formatting affects all human
production: clothing, music, class
struggle, the latest gadgets,
the colors and shapes of flags...
Architecture is a function, it is
the transmission belt linking ideas
to the construction of the world.
It is that by which a system of
ideas attempts to perpetuate itself
throughout history and across
territories. If we have confused



architecture with building, it is
only because buildings are the
human production that comes
closest to a totalizing image of
an accomplished "ideal". But
architecture does not belong to
buildings. It is as much present,
and performs just as effectively its
task, in a collared shirt or a comma
than it does in a Doric column.

The only question architecture
was ever concerned with in the
making of the built environment
was what order should govern
its production: whether through
the multi-millennial system of
"The Orders of Architecture,"
or through the functionalist,
historical, metabolical, futurist,
or postmodern orders of the 20th
century. Buildings, of course,
require no such ordering abstract
system to be useable or functional.
What is at stake, instead, is the
order that ought to be applied to
the world for which the building is
only a metaphor. What is at stake
in architecture is the total sum of
effects a new world order entails in
the organization of reality. In this
process, buildings are models of
the world order.

"After The Revolution" is a review
devoted to the analysis of this new
global architecture.



WHEN ARCHITECTS BURST OUT

by Miguel Rodriguez Casellas

I've learnt to enjoy, quite sadistically,
those instances when my take on architectural
education produces paralysis. I am hired to help
students visualize the light at the end of their
tunnel of speculation, and there I am, as was
done to me so many times before when I was
a vulnerable student, inflicting a customized
crisis of the object to a young soul who did not
sign up for it.

Nine Eleven played a similar trick on
architecture as a whole. The spectacular
destruction of the towers in real time
accelerated the ongoing dematerialization
of architecture: suddenly, magazines were
broadcasting the remnants of the object, either
though projects from the then emerging field
of landscape urbanism, or giving prominence to
the ultimate skin or facade development. After
Nine Eleven, the heroic object was displaced by
the rendered image, and architecture as built
form increasingly saw itself competing with its
own virtuality. A paralysis of the subject, who
was unable to think freely, away from his/her
anxieties, preceded the crisis of the object, as
I recalled it.

But that was architectural media: popular
outlets of design saw an unprecedented
interest in interior design, particularly
domestic environments, right after the tragic
events of Nine Eleven. For some time, I have
been commenting on the connection between
the loss of control over our sense of wellbeing,
brought on by the terrorist attacks, and a
stampede into domestic realms, possibly
suburban, reduced to playgrounds of anxiety
sublimation for a yet to be regained confidence.
A proliferation of TV programs dedicated to
interior makeovers followed the tragedy, where
destruction was treated as a practical joke
played by a neighbor in exchange of a brand-
new domestic environment. This collective

stampede to domestic interiors lasted at least
ten years.

I took my own vacation from the
architectural object while focusing on writing,
school administration and interior design. To
this day, architectural biennales' faith in the
object induces in me a mixture of nostalgia and
cynicism: there is no way I can listen to so many
buzzwords and chants of optimism without
cringing involuntarily. I get it: a secondary city
wants a revamping; and architects are suckers
when confronted with powerful people with
clear agendas.

My healthy relationship with immateriality
in architecture makes me an enthusiastic
audience at performance art events put
together by architects in the context of a
biennale. Andrés Jaque's queering of late
modernist convictions in his Superpowers of
Ten and Bryony Roberts' occupation of Mies'
Federal Center were on my list of never to
be missed events. To turn exploited office
employees into voluntary actors, as Jaque did,
had layers of perversity that went straight to my
alley. Robert's appropriation of black bodies,
on the contrary, made me cry out of anger for
the amount of self-discipline it took to avoid
making a scene and impulsively stopping the
show.

I was already upset with the lack of dialogue
and actual debate when most of the audience of
these events during inaugural week seem busier
networking and making sure that they sound
smart and that no expression or exchange might
jeopardize their access to another biennial,
university job, curator gig or research grant.
I understand why we prefer to remain quiet. It
took me a week to get out of my self-imposed
silence.

Nine Eleven was a moment of active silencing
of voices, an aftermath of violence that brought
new levels of censorship in media and popular
culture, as well as universities. We might
have recovered the confidence in architectural
objects, but the censorship remained in place.

I am not even sure I can openly say what I
think of Roberts' piece, and I am fully aware of
the consensus among American audiences that

there is nothing wrong with a white architect
collaborating with an African American troupe
of adorable teenagers in a Mies van der Rohe
building for the biggest event on town.

Well, I disagree. When brown bodies are
sent to American wars, because there are not
many options left to them to access education
or even jobs, there is nothing cute about
displaying their military discipline to a mostly
white audience of educated citizens. The fear
of brown bodies rebelling against the discipline
that has tried to keep them "in their place," has
been recently projected in the media with new
levels of paranoia, due in fact, to the vocal
reactions seen under the Black Lives Matters
rubric as a response to the slow genocide of
black populations perpetrated by the police in
this country.

Apparently, brown bodies can only rebel
against "civilizing" geometries when they take
the shape of an erotic dance, as it happened
sometimes during the otherwise extraordinary
South Shore Drill Team choreography that
Robert astutely appropriated for her formal
commentary on Mies.

We do not need to be reminded of the
association between the universal grid,
modernity, imperialism and slavery. And if that
was the intention, to reflect on that difficult
correlation, something needed to happen:
something needed to be twisted, shifted,
renegotiated or reconfigured.

There is nothing subversive about giving
fake guns to brown bodies that cannot defend
themselves from institutional aggression: there
is nothing subversive about the celebration
of discipline applied to a body in order to
repress actual emancipation, or as a twisted
instrument of sublimation. There is nothing
new about using geometry to control libidos
and political insurgence. There is nothing
new on claiming collaboration, when there is
appropriation; or domesticating the bodies we
fear. There is nothing new with depoliticizing
architectural education to the point that nobody
sees anything anymore, other than disgruntled
objectors, chips on the shoulders, marginal
voices of resistance to the imperial common
sense and its weapons of mass consensus.

THE SKODHALL KONSTHALL 2000

Alfredo Jaar

"I was shocked to discover
that a community could exist
for thirty years without any
visible cultural or exhibition
space. How do you represent
it the absence of this space
for culture in an entire
community? I found it hard
to believe that people could
live without it the intellectual
and critical stimulus that
visual art can provide" to
question, to speculate, and
to search. It blew my mind.
I sought a spectacular way
to deal with this lack. I
created an exhibition space
for twenty-four hours and
then burned it away I wanted
to offer a glimpse of what
contemporary art is and what
it can do in a community. Then
by "disappearing" it in such a
spectacular way, I hoped to
reveal its absence".



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ABOUT SPECULATIVE TRIBUNE

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The editorial process is cumulative and collective. It
works independently, as a critical instrument to the
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